

Chairman Bulova's 2015 State of the County Address

CHAIRMAN:

Hi I'm Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and welcome to my 2015 State of the County Address. Fairfax County is one of the best places in the entire country to live, work, play and raise a family.

2014 has been a really busy year. Let's take a look at some of the accomplishments we've made, and what's coming up, in 2015.

With our current population at over 1.1 million residents and growing, Fairfax County is planning ahead when it comes to County services, redevelopment opportunities, and transportation options in our community.

In 2014, Fairfax County, and the region, made a lot of progress in the area of transportation. As one of the founding members of the Virginia Railway Express, I was especially pleased last summer with the groundbreakings for two new VRE stations. The stations are located in Spotsylvania, opening this year, and Potomac Shores, opening in 2017. VRE is a real success story. It moves the equivalent of an entire lane of traffic during rush hour that otherwise would be on I-95.

Route 1 and I-66 are two of the busiest corridors in the region. The Virginia Department of Transportation has made substantial progress this year in studying traffic patterns and presenting recommendations to improve these corridors.

Several options have been evaluated for providing transit in the Route 1, Richmond Highway corridor. One option includes a "hybrid" that would extend Metrorail from Huntington to Hybla Valley in combination with BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) that would continue on to Woodbridge. You can see all of the options on the County's Website by clicking on "Transportation".

During 2015, Fairfax County will continue to work with the Commonwealth, our sister jurisdictions, and the community to find multi-modal solutions for both Route 1 and I-66.

The I-95 Express Lane project opened in December, providing added lane capacity and faster, more predictable travel options for commuters.

The 95 Express Lanes operate for about 29 miles, from Garrisonville Road in Stafford County to the Edsall Road area on 395. Carpoolers are able to ride in the Express Lanes for free. Commuters with an EZPass can now pay to enter the Express Lanes and will have a guaranteed travel time from Stafford County to Tysons.

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Get Your E-ZPass Today: www.95expresslanes.com

And of course, the main event in transportation was the opening for Phase I of Metro's new Silver Line!

Since opening day on July 26, the Silver Line has been off to a solid start, carrying approximately 15,000 riders per weekday and exceeding expectations. The Wiehle-Reston East Metro station is already surpassing ridership projections, and is one of the busiest Metro stations in the entire system.

The Wiehle Reston Station is a unique, multi-modal, transportation hub, complete with a state-of-the-art bike room.

With the recent adoption of Fairfax County's Bicycle Master Plan, our Board is working to provide more infrastructure and opportunities for residents to use bikes for transportation rather than getting behind the wheel of a car.

Here is Charlie Strunk to tell us more. Charlie.

CHARLIE:

Hi, I'm Charlie Strunk, Bicycle Program Coordinator with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation. The County's bike program was established seven years ago by the Board of Supervisors. We are committed to making it more comfortable, safe and convenient to get around Fairfax County by bike.

- We've equipped all of our Fairfax Connector buses with front mount bike racks;
- Created the County's first bicycle route map;
- Recently adopted our first bicycle master plan;
- Built new trails and bridges to connect our neighborhoods by bike;
- We're adding more on-road bike lanes through our partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation;
- And, we are committed to improving and expanding bicycle parking options at transit stations, libraries, recreation centers, and schools.

Today, I'm standing in the Wiehle-Reston East Metro Station and the County's first indoor, secure bicycle parking facility: "the Wiehle Reston East Bike & Ride". This bike room is located on the ground level of the station, adjacent to the bus platform, with easy access from Reston Station Boulevard.

This room provides parking for over 200 bicycles, and can be reconfigured to park over 300 as demand increases. Amenities include two fix-it stations with an air pump and repair tools, and additional parking for oversized bikes or bikes with trailers.

Secure parking is provided and membership is required. Membership is 60 dollars a year with a one-time non-refundable fee of 15 dollars. Members have access to the room 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Members are also given an electronic access device (a key fob) like this one, and three registration decals (because, we realize that most commuter bicyclists have more than one bike).

It's simple. Use your fob to enter the room, lock your bike, and head on out to catch a bus or the Metro.

[Enter: Supervisor Hudgins walks her bike into the frame]

SUPERVISOR HUDGINS: Hey, Charlie!

CHARLIE: Supervisor Hudgins! What brings you here?

SUPERVISOR HUDGINS: I use this room all the time! I love to bike – it's one of my favorite ways to get around Fairfax County. The Wiehle-Reston bike room...*[share how you use it and why you love it]*. I'd also like to add that this is Fairfax County's **first** secure bicycle parking facility, and there are more in the works for Phase II of the Silver Line and other locations countywide.

CHARLIE: And the nice thing is, once you're a member, you'll have access to all of the County's "Bike & Ride" rooms.

SUPERVISOR HUDGINS: Good to see you, Charlie – off to a Board meeting. Don't want to be late!

CHARLIE: Happy travels! Thank you Chairman Bulova, and back to you.

CHAIRMAN:

With the help of the Silver Line, Tysons is continuing to realize its promise as a vibrant, mixed-use, urban center.

Work is under way on Phase II of the Silver Line, which will extend Metro to Dulles Airport, with stops along the way at three new stations – Reston Town Center, Herndon and Innovation Center – ending in the Ashburn area of Loudoun County. Completion of Phase II is expected by the end of 2018.

But it's not just Tysons and Reston. Redevelopment is happening all over the County. Encouraging revitalization of older commercial and industrial properties, especially in areas served by transit, is a great way to spur economic growth and business development in Fairfax County.

Real estate that incorporates a variety of uses, such as residential, retail, office and hotel space is in high demand, especially in our area. Recent graduates, young families, empty nesters, our older population, and everyone in between are looking for more lifestyle choices when it comes to housing.

In addition to our traditional suburban neighborhoods, these walkable mixed-use communities offer affordable housing options. Mixed-use developments also help reduce traffic on our roads when workers and residents can **walk** to ground-floor retail and public transit.

Revitalization efforts expand the housing market and business opportunities, and **also** lead to the creation of attractive **entertainment** spots, such as Reston Town Center, Fairfax Corner, the Mosaic District, and the exciting new Springfield Town Center.

Let's go to Springfield to hear from Barbara Byron, Director of the Office of Community Revitalization. Barbara.

BARBARA:

Thank you, Chairman Bulova, for the opportunity to share some of the exciting redevelopment projects that are happening in Fairfax County.

LOWER THIRD NAME SLATE:

Barbara Byron

Office of Community Revitalization (OCR), Director

We are standing in the newly renovated Springfield Town Center. The old Springfield mall has been transformed into the first class shopping experience you see today. The town center opened last October in time for the holiday shopping season, and contains shops, restaurants and a multiplex movie theatre. But, this is only the first phase of the redevelopment of the property. Later phases will include residential and office uses, as well as additional retail opportunities, all within walking distance of the Joe Alexander transportation center and the Springfield Metro Station.

Another example of a recent redevelopment success story is the Mosaic District. This once industrial area in Merrifield is now a vibrant mixed-use town center. The Angelika movie theater, Target, retail shops and restaurants are supported by residential apartment buildings and townhouses within the development. Mosaic has attracted office users as well, with CustomInk locating its headquarters in this vibrant community.

New residential development with ground floor retail will also be coming to McLean with the Elm Street development (on what is currently a surface parking lot), and to Annandale, with the Markham Place redevelopment of an old bowling alley.

In Lake Anne in Reston, the long-awaited redevelopment of the Crescent property is progressing. The County has entered into a public-private partnership with a developer to add additional residential and retail uses into the Village Center, while still preserving a full spectrum of housing choices, including affordable housing.

Development and investment in our revitalization areas benefits Fairfax County's financial outlook in positive and significant ways. It strengthens the non-residential portion of the tax base, relieving pressure on the residential tax payers. Creating mixed-use projects in areas that have been solely commercial, also results in a more efficient use of our transportation infrastructure and parking facilities, better quality of storm water run-off, landscaping, green space, and the reduction of paved surfaces.

In order to facilitate continued reinvestment in these older developed areas of the County, we are undertaking an evaluation of our regulations and standards to be sure that they are current and reflect the emerging urban nature of our activity centers. At the same time, we strive to ensure that attractive developments, including landscaped streets, sidewalks, parks and open spaces, like Springfield Town Center, continue to be created. To learn more about Fairfax County's revitalization districts and upcoming developments, visit OCR's website below. Thank you Chairman Bulova, and back to you.

Lower third across the screen:
Office of Community Revitalization (OCR)
www.fcrevit.org

CHAIRMAN:

Thanks Barbara, for the terrific update. Open space and green space is important when it comes to planning for our future. In Fairfax County, residents place a high priority on spending time outdoors and maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle. From Lake Accotink, to Huntley Meadows, to Riverbend Park, Fairfax County residents and visitors have many beautiful parks, athletic fields and quality recreation facilities to choose from. Over at the newly renovated Oak Marr RECenter, is Kirk Kincannon.

KIRK:

Thank you, Chairman Bulova. My name is Kirk Kincannon, Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority. Our parks are a legacy-system envisioned nearly 65 years ago, when forward thinking leaders anticipated the importance of parkland, history, open space and recreation in support of building a healthy and vibrant community.

Fairfax County is among the top park systems in the country, winning three National Gold Medal Awards to date, receiving national recognition for inclusion programming and facilities, and being one of just over 100 agencies to earn National Accreditation.

Our park system makes up over 23,000 acres of land, including over 300 miles of trails, skate parks, athletic fields and lakefront parks, historic sites, water parks, playgrounds, golf courses and RECenters. Last year, more than 15 million people visited our parks.

As the county's population continues to grow, so does our need to plan for the parks of tomorrow. Neighborhood involvement is the key to creating the right park plan for our future. Our goal is maintaining a healthy and active community and a sustainable park system. As an example, our planning team has developed guidance that will help shape parks and community design in the future development at Tysons, and will ensure that the public's recreational and open space needs are considered.

Beyond our great parks, we have great programs too! We are the largest provider of summer camp opportunities in Fairfax County with more than 22,000 registrants this past year. I am proud to report that in partnership with the Fairfax County Park Foundation and others, we provided nearly one million dollars of program scholarships and reduced rates to individuals last year.

And our system continues to improve and expand. Oak Marr RECenter shines after renovations and the expansion of a new fitness center. Spring Hill RECenter now features an elevated track and the largest, state of the art fitness center in the system. Each of our nine RECenters offers a unique experience providing access to exercise, aquatics programs and a host of different classes.

We also continue to improve the Cross County Trail, and if you love to hike or jog, ride horses or bikes, stay tuned for the creation of the West County Trail, now in the planning stage.

How about music and cultural diversity? This past summer, we provided 175 free concerts, children's programs and outdoor movies attended by 54,000 guests.

Inclusion, community building, volunteerism, healthful living, recreation and stewardship are some of the key words that define this agency. Although staff is the backbone of the Park Authority, we could not do it without the Park Authority Board creating park policy and direction, as well as the support of the Board of Supervisors. Visit us online at fairfaxcounty.gov/parks, and I hope you'll stop by a great park near you.

CHAIRMAN:

Free concerts, made possible by the Park Authority and our generous corporate sponsors, are among my favorite things to do here during the summer. For the past two years, I've enjoyed working with the Park Authority to host "Evenings on the Ellipse" every Thursday at the Fairfax County Government Center.

Friends, families and kids are able to spread out on the lawn and enjoy outstanding entertainment, along with the Farmers Market and food trucks in the front parking lot.

With so many families and children in Fairfax County, educating our youth has always been, and always will be, one of our Board's greatest priorities. Our school system is the largest in Virginia and one of best in the Nation.

The Board of Supervisors partners with the School Board to provide services for families with children. More than **one half** of our County's General Fund Budget goes to our school system. Last year, we invested more than \$1.9 billion in our Public Schools, the largest expenditure in our \$3.7 billion General Fund Budget.

Let's go to our Superintendent, Dr. Karen Garza, for a brief report on our "State of the Schools" in Fairfax County.

DR. GARZA:

Thank you, Chairman Bulova. I'm Karen Garza, Superintendent for Fairfax County Public Schools. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to provide you with a State of the Schools in Fairfax for the 2014/15 school year. I am very proud of the great work we do every day in FCPS in service to our community's young people. I will share with you some of the highlights:

We are now the 10th largest school district in the nation. Our student enrollment has grown by 15,000 students in the last five years and this year, we have 187,000 students in our schools.

That growth is expected to continue and we believe we will exceed 200,000 students by 2020....only six short years away. Our students come from every country in the world and speak more than 200 languages.

Our special needs population continues to grow and this year, we have

- 14% of our students enrolled in Special Education;
- 17% of our students are English Speakers of Other Languages;
- 28% of our students qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Priced Meals, a nationally recognized benchmark for poverty.

We have nearly 23,500 employees who come to work every day ready to serve our students and families. Ninety three percent of our employees are school based and because we are a very large system, our monthly payroll and benefit costs exceed \$180 million dollars.

Our students continue to exceed their counterparts in the state on academic achievement.

- Our graduation rate of 92.9 % exceeds the state average of 89.9%

- Based on data released by VDOE, FCPS students continue to pass the Virginia Standards of Learning (or SOL) tests at a higher rate than students statewide.
- FCPS Students from the class of 2014 outperformed their peers in Virginia and the nation on the SAT. FCPS scores are 41 points above the state's average in Critical Reading, 58 points above the state's average in Mathematics, and 49 points above the state's average in Writing.
- And we have great Career and Technical education programs that prepare our students for the needs of the changing workforce.....35 percent of our graduates - graduate with one or more industry certifications.

The FCPS mission is to prepare all students for college and career success. But what are those skills necessary for every child's success in this rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, and interconnected world? The School Board adopted the FCPS "Portrait of a Graduate," which outlines what our community believes is important for graduates to know and be able to do when they leave FCPS. While still focusing on the academic content areas, the Portrait of a Graduate also allows us to move beyond the high stakes testing environment and develop the skills in our students that employers are seeking for their workforce.

Graduates should leave FCPS knowing how to be a communicator, collaborator, ethical and global citizen, creative and critical thinker, and goal-directed and resilient individual. The Portrait of a Graduate will be the center of the FCPS long-range Strategic Plan, which will be developed during this school year. The strategic plan will assist in aligning FCPS' work so that we are continuously improving and remain one of the finest systems in the country for years to come.

Other news of note:

1. Full-day Mondays for all elementary students was launched this year, increasing instructional time by 74 hours for all elementary students annually.
2. The new Bailey's Upper Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences (where we are standing today) opened this past fall. The new school was converted from an empty five story office building and is the first urban-style school in the County.
3. We also have a new CrisisLink text messaging tool for students and parents needing mental health support and resources. Crisis line staff members respond to the text messages 24 hours a day. The number to text is 703-997-5444. It is also easily accessible from our mobile app and on our website at fcps.edu

On behalf of Fairfax County Public Schools, thank you for your continued support of our great schools.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you Dr. Garza. I am also pleased that the School Board voted last year for full day Mondays for elementary students and to push back start times for middle and high school students starting this fall. Helping our students stay healthy and thrive in an educational environment is one of the greatest gifts we can provide our younger generation.

In addition to providing our students with quality teachers, facilities and resources, The Community Services Board, or CSB, is available to help students in the area of mental health. Now more than ever, researchers and doctors are recognizing the importance of mental health in children and adults, and its effect on our ability to live a happy and balanced life. The Community Services Board and numerous nonprofit organizations around the County are committed to assisting individuals in need of services related to mental health, disabilities, and substance abuse. Like the schools, Fairfax County funds the largest portion of the CSB Budget. Here to tell us a little bit about the CSB is our new Executive Director, Tisha Deegan. Tisha.

TISHA:

Thank you Chairman Bulova. The Community Services Board, or "CSB," is here for all residents of Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

Whether you are old, young or in-between, the CSB is your link to local treatment and resources for mental health and

substance use issues. The CSB also provides services to help people with intellectual disability live, work and thrive in the community. And our Infant and Toddler Connection offers early intervention services for our youngest residents –birth to age 3 –who have, or are at risk for, developmental delays.

Our CSB Emergency Services staff is available 24/7 to help anyone experiencing a psychiatric crisis. They’re located right here, in our new Merrifield Center.

Lower third:

CSB Emergency Services: (703) 573-5679

Merrifield Center: 8221 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive, Merrifield, VA 22031

If it’s not an emergency but you want to find help for yourself or someone you care about, call our entry and referral staff. They can give you information and names of providers in the community, or schedule an assessment to see if CSB services are appropriate for you.

Lower third:

CSB Entry and Referral phone number: (703) 383-8500

In Fairfax County, we all want to be able to live well and enjoy good health. However, as a former U.S. Surgeon General has said, “There is **no** health without mental health.” *[Pause]*

Our mental well-being and our physical well-being are inseparable. Someone with severe, untreated depression may not be able to focus on another serious health concern, like heart disease or diabetes. Sometimes people with serious mental health issues are so ill, things may seem hopeless. Ability to function can be lost and they can lose years – even decades – of life.

But help is here. Prevention works. Treatment is effective. And Recovery is possible.

Health happens here at the Merrifield Center! In addition to emergency, outpatient, and case management services, we also have community connections for peer support and primary health care. We offer classes here and support groups that anyone in the community is welcome to attend. This is a welcoming place, full of light and hope, and a true testament to the commitment of our community and its leaders to the health and well-being of county and city residents. At Merrifield, and at other CSB locations throughout the county, you can see our recovery-oriented system of care come alive.

I invite you to become part of the solution. Take our award-winning Mental Health First Aid course and you can learn critical basic tools (as you would in a CPR or medical first aid course) to help out when you encounter someone who appears to be having a mental health issue.

Lower third:

Mental Health First Aid information: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb

Or take one of the CSB’s free, quick online trainings to practice what to say and do to help someone who may be feeling hopeless or even contemplating suicide. Thousands of our county residents have already taken the training – the link is on our website.

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Suicide prevention page: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/prevent-suicide

As a community, the more of us who learn these skills, the better able we’ll be to remove stigma, identify risk, and prevent tragedies. Working together, we can help make sure that all of our residents can access the wonderful quality of life Fairfax County has to offer.

CHAIRMAN:

Thank you Tisha, for all the progress and great work your team continues to accomplish in human services.

One of the most important and most difficult things the Board does every year is adopt an Annual Budget.

Our economy is very much affected by cutbacks in Federal programs and contracting. Despite our efforts to stimulate business growth, our pace of revenue growth has not returned to pre-2008 levels. We continue to be challenged by reductions in state and federal funding.

In preparing for the FY2016 Budget, County agencies were asked to propose cuts and find efficiencies to close a projected \$100 million shortfall.

County staff are also preparing for a comprehensive “Lines of Business” review of County programs and services in an effort to identify re-organizational opportunities that can result in efficiencies and savings. This will be a multi-year effort.

After the County Executive releases his Advertised Budget in February, I plan to host a number of Community Budget Dialogues around the County. These dialogues are in addition to traditional town meetings and forums that will be held in each magisterial district.

The Budget Dialogues will include presentations from the Schools and the County, and will provide an opportunity for small group discussion on our current economic situation and challenges. I encourage you to attend one of these dialogues, or your district supervisor’s budget meetings, and get involved in the FY2016 Budget process.

Our budget process is very informative and transparent. You can follow the process online at fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb.

When the Board adopts a budget, we are investing in our community’s priorities. It is important for the community to be at the table with us during this process and I look forward to working with you.

On a special note, coming up this year, I am proud to say that Fairfax County is hosting the second largest international multi-sport event in the world.

The World Police and Fire Games will showcase the best firefighters, police officers and first responders from around the world during 10 days of spectacular competitions, games and sporting events. Thanks to our local public safety personnel in the Police, Fire & Rescue, and Sheriff’s Departments, Fairfax County is the safest jurisdiction of our size in the entire nation. I am excited that we have the opportunity to host athletes from 70 different countries, and showcase our County’s impressive public safety capabilities.

The games will be held June 26 through July 6, this summer. Visit fairfax2015.com to find out how you can volunteer, donate, and get involved.

Finally, 2015 is an election year for the Board of Supervisors. All 10 Board seats, including the Chairman’s, are up for election or re-election, as well as members of the Virginia General Assembly and the School Board. There will be many opportunities for you to participate in campaign-related forums, debates and activities.

An informed and engaged community is a well-served community. Thank you for playing an important role in making our community a great place to live, work and play. It is my honor to serve you as Chairman, and I look forward to working with you during the year ahead. It’s going to be a great year.

Thanks so much for watching and for your interest in Fairfax County Government.